

ASCO[®]

Resilience Skills Training Program

Session 1: Knowing & Using Your Strengths

Facilitator Guide

SESSION 1: Knowing & Using Your Strengths

Key points:

- Learners may be **ambivalent** about resilience as yet ‘another thing to do’. Openly acknowledge complexity and allow ambivalence. See if participants would be willing to try one small thing.
- Maintaining or growing resilience is important. Today we will focus on our strengths. Staying aware and promoting the use of our strengths is **energizing** for most people and might open up new options. Consider using a personal example that you could use in the large group discussion at the end of the Try section.
- Consciously set the tone for the group—everything you do in the first session will be the new norm for the sessions to follow.

Facilitator Materials	Materials & Handouts for each participant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Flipchart or whiteboard, where you can write session structure to make it visible ➤ This teaching guide, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Course Overview Handout ○ Strengths Exercise Handout ○ Closing poem (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Small notebook ➤ Course Overview Handout (page 5) ➤ Strengths Exercise Handout (page 6) ➤ List of available mental health resources at your institution

Pre-session setup:

- Arrive a few minutes early to make sure the room is set-up.
- Have your handouts ready, and facilitator guide at hand.
- Write the session structure on flipchart/whiteboard.
- Spend a moment getting ready: What’s your aspiration for the group today?

Timetable & Talking Points:

00:00 – 00:10 **Check-in** = Introduce facilitator, faculty, group, purpose, structure.

Because this is the first session, you need an introduction that creates a safe learning space.

- As people come in, give them a slip of paper, ask them to note their observations: did they notice what worry or concern they had to put on hold to come today? Write on a slip of paper, put in a paper bag, may retrieve at the end.
- Please introduce yourself with your first name and one sentence about something you enjoyed about a patient you saw in the past few days. Start with yourself and model the use of one sentence.
- We will be learning skills to become more resilient, and that our approach will be learning by doing. Every session will have a similar structure, and we’re doing the check-in (point to words on flipchart)
- To maximize the learning that happens here, we have a few agreements. If you get paged and need to answer, it’s fine to step outside to talk, but please minimize what you do on your phone while you’re in the group. If you need to respond to a text, please step outside. You’ll be telling and listening to each other’s experiences here, so please treat this material confidentially. But it’s fine to share your insights about yourself with others outside the course, and we encourage that.

00:10 – 00:20 **Reflect** = What’s your reaction to the idea of learning skills to be more resilient? Pairs or group discussion for 5 minutes, then highlights from the group.

- We'll start each session with a challenge. So, this first challenge is a question: What's your reaction to learning skills to be more resilient?
- Write for a few moments. Then discuss with a partner (2 or 3).
- What surprised you? Get a few responses and repeat them back. What I'm hearing is x, y, z.
- Thank people by name, especially those that are more skeptical or worried. Highlight that there is room for both curiosity and hesitance. Acknowledge dialectic: One more thing to do with the concept that this is important in your field and human experience overall.

00:20 – 00:30 **Learn** = Overview of the course, Starting with your strengths.

- Pass out the one-page [Course Overview Handout](#) (page 5 of this guide).
- I'd like to give you a 10,000-foot overview of how this course will work. Every session will be structured in a similar way.
- Go through the [Course Overview Handout](#).

00:30 – 00:50 **Try** = The strengths inventory. Fill out individually for 5 minutes, discuss in pairs for 5 minutes, then group discussion for 10 minutes.

- Now let's dig deeper into your strengths. I'm going to pass out a strengths inventory, and we'll have about 5 minutes to fill it out.
- Pass out [Strengths Exercise Handout](#) (page 6-8 of this guide), give 5-7 minutes for each individual to complete it: Ok, let's discuss it with a partner for a couple of minutes each. What did you find?
- After 5 minutes: Let's have a group discussion now. Most of us have been trained as clinicians to make diagnoses that identify pathology, or problems. And this leaves us with a tendency to focus on what's not working. But what makes us more resilient is often related to our strengths. How could you draw on the strengths that you identified here in your daily work? Sometimes people are surprised that something is a strength because they may not see it as a skill that everyone possesses
- Insert importance of mindfulness-- maintaining our awareness and tolerance of moment to moment experiences; it is a way of paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment we are in, and doing so in a manner that observes rather than judges. This gives us more space to come off automatic pilot and choose thoughtfully what to do next: sit with what is there, or direct ourselves to a more effective space i.e. noticing strengths even when feeling overwhelmed.
- Thank you for these insights. Let's talk about how to remind ourselves to use our strengths.

00:50 – 00:55 **Prep** = Learning partners, assignments

- Pick a learning partner for this week. Talk to each other about one way you're going to focus on one or two of your strengths in the next 2 weeks. Try to find a way to use one of your signature strengths that is specific. For example, if your strength is curiosity, maybe the goal could be, I am going to ask one of my co-workers about their projects after team check-in each week. Opportunity to set an intention, use technology to help (get Siri reminder, etc.)
- In 1 week, you need to text or email your learning partner. The text or email should say: How's it going?
- If your partner used their strength or even just thought about it, give them a high-five, or a positive word. If your partner said, 'umm, I forgot', you encourage them, 'I know that you can do this'. If your partner says, 'oh this didn't really work for me', ask 'what happened?'
- For extra credit, you text, email or talk to each other about this twice!

00:55 – 00:60 **Check-out** = One closing word

- Thank you for coming today. Have a resilient 2 weeks (or however long it will be until the next session).

- Could everyone say one word about how you're feeling right now? (Listen to words, don't comment, just hear, and thank them).
- If you have time, you can read the [Closing Poem](#) (page 9 of this guide); but please end on time.

Course Overview

SESSION 1: Knowing & Using Your Strengths

COURSE OVERVIEW

- Here's a 10,000-foot overview of the course. Every session will have the same structure.
- We'll **check in**, **reflect** on a challenge, **learn** about a skill to use, **try** out the skill in an exercise during the session, **prep** how we will try field testing the skill, and then **check out**.
- This will be very different from other sessions where you have a lecture—in these sessions we will be learning by doing.
- We'll be covering a set of skills that will help you be more resilient. We try them out during the session so you can get your feet wet, and maybe troubleshoot a bit. All skills take practice. I wouldn't expect you to be able to do them perfectly after I explain once. Acquiring a skill takes your attention, your willingness to try, and practice.
- Your feedback on what works and what needs improvement is very important. Please feel free to contact ASCO even as the course is underway to help us understand what works and how we could make this better.

FLIP TO THE POSITIVE: USE YOUR STRENGTHS

- The first topic is about using your strengths. The idea of evaluating your strengths comes from research in positive psychology. Positive psychology is the study of what makes people thrive.
- As clinicians we have been trained to focus on what's wrong with someone—what's their diagnosis? This is obviously an important clinical skill, but if we view ourselves only through that way, it can create a spiral of negative thinking.
- We have developed this way of thinking evolutionarily. We are velcro for negative and teflon for positive.
- One way to increase wellbeing is to identify your strengths.
- Identifying your strengths is a way of understanding what motivates and inspires you. Think of it as responding to a challenge by starting from a place where you've got some assets.

WHY IS IT WORTH A TRY?

- Using your strengths can result in a positive spiral of energy—this is one of the major hypotheses about why positive psychology leads to more well-being.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2908186/>
- In a study of 622 adults, a strengths-based intervention resulted in improvements in happiness and mood at 1, 3, and 6 months, compared to a control intervention.
<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-012-9380-0>

OTHER RESOURCES:

- 340 Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths by Tayyab Rashid & Afroze Ajum
http://tayyabrashid.com/pdf/via_strengths.pdf

RED FLAGS

- If you feel like your negative thoughts just won't let up, please consider talking to someone. There are resources available, and I could guide you.

Handout: Strengths Exercise

SESSION 1: Knowing & Using Your Strengths

Step 1:

Read each description of a human quality and decide whether it is ‘a lot like you’ or ‘not at all like you’. If the quality is somewhat like you or so-so, leave the box blank. Read the descriptions fully, and jot down your first impulse.

Fill in: + a lot like you - not at all you [] in-between	Does this describe you? Or not?	This strength is called:
	You are curious about the world, seek out novelty, and are rarely bored. You are curious about your patients and their lives.	Curiosity
	You love learning new things, even in the absence of any external incentives to do so. You get excited about new medical knowledge and teaching it to others.	Love of learning
	You think things through and examine them from all sides. You are able to change your mind and are very good at sifting information objectively and rationally, in the service of others.	Open-mindedness
	You are rarely content with doing something the conventional way if a better way might exist, and you are great at applying this to the care of your patients.	Creativity
	You are tuned in to the feelings of your patients, families, and co-workers--their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions--and then you <u>act</u> to put people at ease.	Social intelligence
	Although you may not consider yourself wise, your colleagues hold this view of you. They value your perspective on cases and professional challenges and turn to you for advice.	Perspective
	You do not shrink from threat, challenge, or difficulty, and are willing to take stances that are unpopular. You speak up for what is right even if there is opposition.	Bravery
	You finish what you start. You take on difficult projects and finish them, usually with good cheer. This does not mean you pursue unattainable goals. Rather you remain flexible, and realistic.	Persistence
	You are down to earth and without pretense. You represent your intentions and commitments to others and to yourself in sincere fashion, whether by word or deed.	Authenticity
	You are kind and generous to others, and you are never too busy to do a favor. Your actions are often guided by other people’s best interests, even at the cost of your own immediate needs.	Kindness

<p>You value close relationships with others. You have deep and sustained feelings for others—not romantic—this is more about deep ties, both personal and professional.</p>	<p>Love</p>
<p>You are a loyal and dedicated teammate. You always do your share, and you work hard to contribute to the work your team does with a patient and family.</p>	<p>Teamwork</p>
<p>You do not let your personal feelings bias your decisions about other people, and treat colleagues, patients, and families fairly. You give everyone a chance and can set aside your prejudices.</p>	<p>Fairness</p>
<p>You excel at organizing others to work towards goals, even as you maintain good relations with all, and handle intergroup relations “with malice toward none and charity toward all.”</p>	<p>Leadership</p>
<p>You can easily hold your desires, needs, and impulses in check when appropriate. When something bad happens, you can hold negative feelings, and generate positive emotions on your own.</p>	<p>Self-regulation</p>
<p>You are a careful person, and do not say or do things you might later regret. Your choices are consistently prudent and strategic. You can keep a long-term vision in sight.</p>	<p>Prudence</p>
<p>You do not seek the spotlight, preferring to let your accomplishments speak for themselves. You see your own victories and defeats as pretty unimportant in the larger scheme of things.</p>	<p>Humility</p>
<p>You stop and smell the roses. You appreciate beauty, excellence, and skill in all domains: nature, arts, science, and all the abilities that others possess—causing you to experience awe and wonder.</p>	<p>Appreciation of beauty & excellence</p>
<p>You are aware of the good things that happen to you, and you never take them for granted. You always take the time to express your thanks—which might include things like God, nature, life.</p>	<p>Gratitude</p>
<p>You expect the best in the future, and you plan and work in order to achieve it. You expect that good events will occur and feel that these can be brought about if you work towards your goals.</p>	<p>Hope</p>
<p>You have strong and coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe. You know where you fit in, and life has meaning for you because of something larger than yourself.</p>	<p>Spirituality</p>
<p>You forgive those who have done you wrong. You always give people a second chance. Your guiding principle is mercy and not revenge.</p>	<p>Forgiveness</p>
<p>You like to laugh and bring smiles to other people. You are playful and funny. You can easily see the light side of things and have the ability to defuse tense situations.</p>	<p>Humor</p>
<p>You are a spirited person and throw yourself into the activities you undertake. You wake up in the morning looking forward to the day and bring an infectious passion to what you do.</p>	<p>Zest</p>

Step 2:

Look at the rows you marked with a '+' and circle the 5 that are MOST like you. Then look at the rows you marked with a '-' and circle the 5 that are most UNLIKE you.

The 5 strengths that are most like you are ones you can build on. Remember that everyone has strengths *and* weaknesses, and that the purpose of this exercise is knowing where you stand today.

Step 3:

Write down your top 5 strengths here, in any order:

Step 4:

How could you use one of these strengths more when you're at work? Write a couple of ideas and talk them over with your partner.

Closing Poem (Optional)

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The Journey

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice--
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do--
determined to save
the only life you could save.